

Submission
No 959

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Mrs Xenia Pridmore

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Partially
Confidential

Birth Trauma Inquiry.

Xenia Jane Pridmore-

My name is Xenia Pridmore. I'm 32 years old, I'm trained in media, comms and theatre and work in the entrepreneurship space. I'm married to a paramedic and we have moved out to [redacted], NSW for his job with [redacted]. We have 3 lovely boys.

I birthed our first two children at [redacted], Sydney. Our third boy was born early at 36 weeks while on a little break with my husband.

Today, I'll be telling the story of our third boy, [redacted] birth at [redacted] Hospital on 08/09/2022

The Maternity care in regional NSW is lacking. It groans under the weight of under resourced midwives, barely any local GPs to choose GP shared care with, and in [redacted], one obstetrician. Yes, you read that right. In this town and for the neighbouring smaller towns we have one OB (there was another one who has been off sick for a while and she was not replaced)

I felt nervous about birthing here. I've heard too many stories. I'd asked questions and they had been ignored. I'd asked for a water birth like my first two and that was rejected because they didn't have a bath. So, when I went into labour 3 hours down the road it almost felt like a get out of jail free card.

I birthed at [redacted] hospital. A hospital MUCH larger than [redacted]. I arrived only an hour before birthing our boy. My husband had called ahead to tell of our arrival and that I was not booked in. We were met by a senior midwife and a student midwife. Both were kind, professional and reassuring. I could not have asked for more from them.

I was taken into a room and assessed and monitored. Both midwives were great at explaining and getting me settled and exclaiming that I was 6 cm and was close to meeting our baby. They got me in the bath, then moved me to the shower where a doctor came in and introduced herself. I was in the transition stage and trying to breathe and concentrate through my contractions. This doctor spoke loudly as though we were having a conversation on the side of a sports field and explained that I needed a canula in to have precautionary antibiotics because I hadn't had my group B strep swab. The midwives turned to the doctor and explained that I was very close to birth and it would be a redundant procedure- but she kept insisting. My husband then advocated for me, I managed to say the word no a few times before then pushing out our baby a few minutes later while she watched. She then left.

A while later the same doctor was brought back into the room to stitch me up. I had torn in 3 places. After two previous pregnancies, I'd never had stitches before. My legs were put in stirrups as she set her equipment up and explained that she would be as quick as possible.

She said a few times 'you're going to hate me for this'

I was given gas and air to suck on and then I felt the anaesthetic needle go in, and 3 seconds later I felt her first stitch. She did not wait for it to take effect. She did not test and ask if I could feel it. She just immediately started stitching. My body started rising off the bed as I felt the most delicate part of my body being sewn up. I exclaimed in shock "I can feel it! I can feel it! Please no! Please stop!"

And she responded "I saw what you just did. You birthed a baby- you're such a champion, aren't you?" and kept sewing. I screamed into my husband's shirt and screamed into the gas and air tube. I looked to the student midwives face and she was crying but quiet.

The senior midwife had left the room to do paperwork.

I told the doctor again "I can feel it! Please no" and she ignored me.

It felt like the longest period of time and was so incredibly painful. I lay on that bed feeling like a piece of discarded meat. Like I had no say over my body. Like I had just concentrated on a whole day of labour, to safely deliver our little boy, to then be treated like my screams were silent and my body was a quick pin cushion before the doctor's next job. She patronised me and from the moment I met her, didn't actually listen to a single thing I had to say.

The hospital sent a social worker to talk us through it and to help us fill out a one-page complaint form. It felt so inadequate filling out a form, to then get a generated email from the hospital thanking me for my feedback (the hospital did call a week later to apologise)

The aftermath was months of physical and emotional healing that still leaves me in tears. It affected my moods, my parenting, my relationships and even how confident I was to use a toilet. Staff at _____ said that _____ hospital would be notified of what happened and that I would be looked after but that did not happen. Nobody brought it up back home- I called a number 6 months later and travelled 6 hours round trip with my family so I could have a counselling session in person and talk it through.